

***Election/Restrictions***

1. Claim 12 is directed to an allowable product. Pursuant to the procedures set forth in MPEP § 821.04(b), claims 18, 18, 40 and 41, directed to the process of making the allowable product, previously withdrawn from consideration as a result of a restriction requirement, are hereby rejoined and fully examined for patentability under 37 CFR 1.104.

Because a claimed invention previously withdrawn from consideration under 37 CFR 1.142 has been rejoined, **the restriction requirement between groups I and II as set forth in the Office action mailed on 10/09/08 is hereby withdrawn.** In view of the withdrawal of the restriction requirement as to the rejoined inventions, applicant(s) are advised that if any claim presented in a continuation or divisional application is anticipated by, or includes all the limitations of, a claim that is allowable in the present application, such claim may be subject to provisional statutory and/or nonstatutory double patenting rejections over the claims of the instant application. Once the restriction requirement is withdrawn, the provisions of 35 U.S.C. 121 are no longer applicable. See *In re Ziegler*, 443 F.2d 1211, 1215, 170 USPQ 129, 131-32 (CCPA 1971). See also MPEP § 804.01.

**REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE**

2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

None of the prior art is found to teach or sufficiently suggest, a polyvinyl alcohol gel comprising at least two different polyvinyl alcohols selected from two of

predominantly linear polyvinyl alcohols, PVA1 and PVA2, and a long-chain branched polyvinyl alcohol, PVA3, in combination with a swelling agent, wherein the degrees of polymerization ("DP") of PVA1 and PVA3 are >1000 and the degree of polymerization ("DP") of PVA2 is in the range of 50-1000.

Thus, claims 12-30 and 36-41 to the polyvinyl alcohol gel and the process of preparing the gel are allowable.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Dr. Kelechi C. Egwim whose telephone number is (571) 272-1099. The examiner can normally be reached on M-T (7:30-6:00).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David Wu can be reached on (571) 272-1114. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only.

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/Dr. Kelechi C. Egwim/  
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1796

KCE